United Nations CEDAW/C/RWA/CO/7-9

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
9 March 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports of Rwanda*

1. The Committee considered the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports of Rwanda (CEDAW/C/RWA/7-9) at its 1486th and 1487th meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1486 and 1487), held on 23 February 2017. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in CEDAW/C/RWA/Q/7-9 and the responses of Rwanda are contained in CEDAW/C/RWA/Q/7-9/Add.1.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its combined seventh to ninth periodic reports. It also appreciates the State party's written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group and welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Gender and Family Promotion, Espérance Nyirasafari, and included representatives of the Department of International Justice and Judicial Cooperation of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2009 of the State party's sixth periodic report (CEDAW/C/RWA/6) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the following:

(a) Law No. 32/2016 of 28 August 2016 governing persons and the family, which repeals several provisions discriminatory against women;

* Adopted by the Committee at its sixty-sixth session (13 February-3 March 2017).

Please recycle

(b) Law No. 27/2016 of 08 July 2016 governing matrimonial regimes, donations and successions, which explicitly prohibits discrimination between male and female children in successions;

(c) Organic Law No. 12/2013/OL of 12 September 2013 on State finances and property, which enforces accountability measures for gender-sensitive resource allocation across all sectors, programmes and projects through gender budget statements;

(d) Organic Law No. 10/20/2013/OL of 11 July 2013 governing political parties and politicians, which prohibits any form of discrimination based on gender, sex, race and religion in political parties;

(e) Law No. 43/2013 of 16 June 2013 governing land in Rwanda, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in relation to access to land;

(f) Organic Law No. 01/2012/OL of 2 May 2012 instituting the Penal Code, which prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;

(g) Law No. 54/2011 of 14 December 2011 relating to the rights and the protection of the child, which provides for the same responsibilities for child protection by both parents;

(h) Organic Law No. 02/2011/OL of 27 July 2011 governing the organization of education, which provides that the education of the citizen shall not be characterized by any form of discrimination;

(i) Law No. 27/2010 of 19 June 2010 relating to elections, which requires that at least 30 per cent of candidates for parliamentary elections on the lists of political parties be women.

5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption of the following:

(a) National Gender Strategic Plan (2016-2020);

(b) National Action Plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (2016-2020) on women and peace and security;

(c) National Implementation Plan of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2012-2017);

(d) National Policy against Gender-based Violence (2011) and its Strategic Plan (2011-2016);

(e) Legal and Policy Framework for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Rwanda (2011);

(f) National Gender Policy and its Strategic Plan (2010).

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, since the consideration of the previous report, the State party ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in 2015.

C. Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites Parliament, in line with its mandate, to take the**

necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.

D. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Legal status of the Convention

8. The Committee welcomes the information provided by the delegation stating that the Convention may be directly applied by and invoked in national courts. It is concerned, however, that, following the amendments made to the Constitution in 2015, the Constitution and organic laws take precedence over international treaties.

9. **The Committee, with reference to its general recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention, encourages the State party to vest the Convention with the status that ratified international treaties had before the 2015 constitutional amendments.**

Definition of equality and non-discrimination

10. The Committee notes with appreciation that the principle of equality between women and men and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex are enshrined in the Constitution. It also welcomes the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation in different areas. It notes with concern, however, that several discriminatory provisions, such as punishment for marital rape being lower than that for rape, remain in the law, that discriminatory customs continue to be applied, for example in the area of inheritance law, and that there is no comprehensive anti-discrimination law.

11. **The Committee recommends that the State party repeal all remaining legal provisions that are discriminatory towards women and that it adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that prohibits discrimination on all grounds and encompasses direct and indirect discrimination in both the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention and general recommendation No. 28. It also recommends that the State party provide capacity-building programmes for judges, local authorities and mediation committee members (*abunzi*) on the strict application of such anti-discrimination legislation.**

Access to justice

12. The Committee welcomes the introduction of a legal aid system for women and men in vulnerable situations through the Access to Justice Bureaux, which have been established in each district of the State party with specific legal aid desks for women, as well as the establishment of the Isange One Stop Centres, which provide limited legal assistance to women who are victims of gender-based violence. It also notes with appreciation that article 2 of Ministerial Order No. 002/08.11 of 11 February 2014 on court fees in civil, commercial, social and administrative matters exempts claimants from court fees for claims related to gender-based violence against women. It is concerned, however, about the absence of specific legal aid schemes for women that would take into consideration their disproportionate lack of economic independence and exposure to sociocultural barriers in access to justice, for example when seeking to file complaints for gender-based violence or land inheritance claims. The Committee also notes with concern that many women are not aware of their rights and how to claim them in court.

13. **With reference to general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Strengthen systems of legal aid and public defence that are accessible, sustainable and responsive to the needs of women and ensure that such services are provided in a timely, continuous and effective manner at all stages of the judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings;

(b) Remove remaining barriers, including economic and sociocultural barriers, to women's access to justice by providing legal aid and ensure that fees for issuing documents and filing complaints, as well as court costs, are reduced for women with low incomes and waived for women living in poverty;

(c) Develop targeted outreach activities to disseminate information about justice mechanisms and how women can have access to them as well as to legal aid schemes, and promote a culture and a social environment in which justice-seeking by women is viewed as both legitimate and acceptable rather than as a cause for additional discrimination or stigmatization.

National machinery for the advancement of women

14. The Committee appreciates the progress achieved by the State party in the implementation and mainstreaming of women's rights and commends it on its national machinery for the advancement of women, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion. It notes with appreciation that gender focal persons at the provincial and district levels facilitate gender mainstreaming. It is concerned, however, about the absence of regional gender-equality bodies.

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen its national machinery by providing it with adequate visibility, power and human, technical and financial resources at all levels in order to further increase its effectiveness and enhance its capacity to coordinate and monitor actions for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality. It also recommends that the State party place a particular focus on strengthening the capacity of the national machinery at the regional level.**

Non-governmental organizations

16. The Committee expresses concern about the significant obstacles faced by non-governmental organizations, including the cumbersome registration requirements introduced with Law No. 04/2012 of 17 February 2012 governing the organization and the functioning of national non-governmental organizations and Law No. 05/2012 of 17 February 2012 governing the organization and the functioning of international non-governmental organizations, as well as interference by the Rwanda Governance Board with the appointment of leadership positions in certain non-governmental organizations.

17. **The Committee reminds the State party of the important role of civil society, including women's rights organizations. It recommends that the State party review the registration requirements for non-governmental organizations to ensure that such organizations that work on human rights, in particular women's rights organizations, may be established and operate without undue restrictions, and that it ensure that the role of the Rwanda Governance Board is purely regulatory.**

Temporary special measures

18. The Committee appreciates the introduction of temporary special measures in different areas to promote the advancement of women and counterbalance discrimination experienced by them. It notes with concern that insufficient temporary special measures are in place to increase the participation of women in

particularly vulnerable situations, such as female heads of households, women with disabilities, rural women and Batwa women. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information about any temporary special measures in place to increase women's participation in the diplomatic service and in trade unions, and women's participation in all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, the horticultural industry, fisheries and cross-border trade.

19. **The Committee recommends that the State party implement awareness-raising campaigns, including on the purpose of introducing temporary special measures as a strategy necessary for accelerating the realization of women's de facto equality. It also recommends that the State party introduce additional temporary special measures, such as a gender parity system for the appointment and accelerated recruitment of women, especially in senior positions and in all sectors of the economy, with a special focus on women in particularly vulnerable situations, such as female heads of households, women with disabilities, rural women and Batwa women.**

Stereotypes

20. The Committee welcomes the awareness-raising measures taken by the State party to address discriminatory stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. However, the Committee is concerned that those measures insufficiently tackle the prevalence of deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that give a higher status to men and boys and the resulting subordination of women and girls, which undermines their social status, autonomy, educational opportunities and professional careers, as well as constitutes an underlying cause of gender-based violence against women. In this regard, the Committee also notes with concern that:

(a) Data indicate that, from the age of 15 years, girls perform on a daily basis almost six hours more of domestic work than boys of the same age, and such unequal sharing of domestic burdens is accepted by society;

(b) Women are frequently barred from household decision-making, and men are regularly in control of household property;

(c) There is a general lack of acceptance of women in decision-making positions and reluctance to implement decisions made by them.

21. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its awareness-raising measures and adopt a comprehensive strategy to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that discriminate against women, in order to effectively promote gender equality, and eliminate patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes concerning the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society. Such measures should include efforts made in collaboration with civil society and community leaders to educate and raise awareness of substantive equality of women and men and target women and men at all levels of society, as well as educational measures targeted at the public at large and mandatory education on women's rights and gender equality in school at all levels;**

(b) **Accelerate its efforts to launch information campaigns with the media to strengthen the understanding of substantive gender equality and continue to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes about women's roles through a positive and non-stereotypical portrayal of women;**

(c) Establish a baseline and clear indicators to measure the progress made as a result of such strategies and inform the Committee about that progress in its next periodic report.

Gender-based violence against women

22. The Committee appreciates the measures taken by the State party to eliminate gender-based violence against women and provide assistance to victims, including the adoption of the National Policy against Gender-based Violence, and a corresponding Strategic Plan, and the establishment of the Isange One Stop Centres, anti-gender-based violence clubs in schools that involve both girls and boys, and gender desks in the Rwanda National Police and the Rwanda Defence Force. The Committee notes with concern, however, that the number of women who are victims of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, is particularly high in the State party. It is furthermore concerned that:

(a) Gender-based violence against women is widely accepted by society, a situation that is exacerbated by the common perception that the traditional patriarchal system is "under threat", and younger men are inclined to consider that it is justified to beat their wives;

(b) Gender-based violence against women is largely underreported because of the victims' fear of stigma, retaliation and women's economic dependence on the perpetrator, as well as their lack of awareness of their rights and how to claim them;

(c) The Penal Code provides for significantly lower sentences for marital rape than for rape;

(d) Law No. 59/2008 of 10 September 2008 on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence criminalizes the victims' refusal to testify;

(e) There is a lack of information on long-term shelters and relocation schemes for victims of gender-based violence, and the Isange One Stop Centres are being established at the district level only, which compels many victims to travel long distances to reach them;

(f) The resources allocated to the provision of medical, psychological and legal assistance to victims are insufficient;

(g) There is no centralized system of data collection on gender-based violence against women.

23. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women, as well as target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals on the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Enhance its efforts to firmly combat all forms of gender-based violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, paying particular attention to disadvantaged groups;

(b) In cooperation with civil society, take additional educational measures, targeted at the public of all ages, to dismantle the main underlying cause of gender-based violence against women, namely predominant societal patriarchal attitudes about the roles of women in society and the relationships between women and men, which further undermine the human rights of women under the guise of "family protection";

(c) Take measures to encourage victims to report gender-based violence against women, including by launching awareness-raising campaigns targeted

at the public and women and girls in particular, to dismantle the stigma attached to victims and foster understanding of the importance of upholding the human rights of women;

(d) Accelerate the increase in the number of Isange One Stop Centres, as planned, particularly in rural areas, to provide women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence and their children with access to long-term shelter and relocation possibilities, as well as financial support and access to income-generating opportunities;

(e) Ensure that reports of gender-based violence are effectively investigated and prosecuted and that perpetrators are adequately punished, and increase the funds allocated to victim assistance;

(f) Accelerate the revision of the Penal Code currently in progress and increase the penalty for marital rape provided in paragraph 199 to harmonize it with the penalty for rape provided in paragraph 197;

(g) Amend Law No. 59/2008 on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence to decriminalize the victims' refusal to testify against perpetrators;

(h) Establish a system of standardized collection and analysis of data on gender-based violence against women to understand its magnitude, trends and patterns and use such data as the basis for comprehensive measures and targeted interventions;

(i) Based on the results of its current evaluation, renew the National Strategic Plan (2011-2016) for the implementation of the National Policy against Gender-based Violence.

Gender-based violence against women in conflict situations

24. The Committee is concerned about reports of severe human rights violations, including cases of gang rape and other forms of sexual violence against women, committed by members of the armed forces, as described in the report of the mapping exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003 that the United Nations published in 2010, which have not been investigated by the State party, thus leading to impunity for perpetrators.

25. **In the light of general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, the Committee reminds the State party that passive acquiescence to past violence reinforces the culture of silence, impunity and stigmatization and that its obligations under the Convention require it to address all violations of women's rights, in addition to the underlying structural sex- and gender-based discrimination underpinning such violations. It recommends that the State party:**

(a) Establish a commission of inquiry, consisting of both national and international commissioners mandated to investigate all allegations against members of the armed forces, and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and receive sanctions commensurate with their acts and that victims have access to adequate and effective reparations;

(b) Monitor the implementation of the code of conduct for members of the armed forces and strengthen regular training and retraining on women's rights and on applying a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of gender-based violence against women.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

26. The Committee appreciates the efforts made by the State party to prosecute perpetrators of trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls, the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of trafficking, and the assistance provided to victims. It also notes that a bill on trafficking is under development. It is, however, concerned about:

(a) The relatively low number of prosecutions and convictions of traffickers, inter alia because of insufficient resources allocated to law enforcement;

(b) Insufficient prevention efforts, as demonstrated by the reported increase in trafficking in adolescent girls for purposes of sexual slavery under the pretext of offering them opportunities to study or work abroad.

27. **The Committee recommends that the State party accelerate the adoption of the bill on trafficking in persons and ensure that it is fully in line with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and accompanied by a comprehensive national action plan, which is adequately resourced. It also recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Address the root causes of trafficking in women and their exploitation in sexual slavery and prostitution by increasing efforts to improve their economic situation;**

(b) **Strengthen measures to protect potential victims from trafficking, including by stepping up campaigns to promote a common understanding of the phenomenon of trafficking, set up a 24/7 free hotline and encourage reporting by victims and the general public;**

(c) **Increase the human, technical and financial resources allocated to the investigation, prosecution and punishment of traffickers.**

28. The Committee notes with concern that poverty continues to compel many women to resort to prostitution and that article 205 of the Penal Code criminalizes women in prostitution. The Committee appreciates the establishment of exit programmes for women in prostitution but is concerned that those are insufficiently funded.

29. **The Committee recommends that the State party use the revision of the Penal Code currently in progress:**

(a) **To decriminalize women in prostitution;**

(b) **To increase access to exit programmes for women in prostitution and ensure adequate possibilities for them to report gender-based violence against women;**

(c) **Carry out vigorous educational and awareness-raising measures targeted at the general public, in particular men and boys, to reduce the demand for prostitution. Such measures should place a particular focus on dismantling all notions of subordination of women and all forms of objectification of women.**

Participation in political and public life

30. The Committee welcomes the State party's leading role regarding the participation of women in Parliament, having the largest female representation worldwide, as well as the relatively high representation of women in decision-

making positions, including among provincial governors and in the judiciary. It notes with concern, however, that mandatory quotas have not been reached at the local level and that the representation of women is low at the district level, especially in leadership positions. The Committee is also concerned about the persisting inequality between women and men with respect to leadership positions in the private sector.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party increase efforts to implement statutory quotas for women's representation in decision-making bodies at the local and district levels, including by:**

(a) **Launching awareness-raising campaigns to highlight the importance of women's full and equal participation in political and public life, in particular in leadership positions at all levels;**

(b) **Providing training on gender equality for politicians, journalists, teachers, local officials and civil society leaders, especially men, to enhance the understanding that the full, free and democratic participation of women in political and public life on an equal basis with men is a requirement for the full implementation of the Convention.**

Education

32. The Committee notes with appreciation that the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools has increased in the State party. It also welcomes the campaigns for raising the awareness of boys about menstruation. It notes with concern, however, that:

(a) Girls' rate of transition to the next level of education remains lower than that of boys, which may be attributed to the high number of early pregnancies, insufficient sanitation facilities for girls and discriminatory stereotyped attitudes on the education of women and girls;

(b) Notwithstanding the introduction of lower pass marks for girls, boys continue to perform better at school, partly because of girls' unequal burden of household tasks, which has a negative impact on their time for study;

(c) Girls who become pregnant are suspended from school for one year;

(d) The access of women and girls to traditionally male-dominated professions and tertiary education remains low;

(e) Many girls are reportedly victims of sexual violence at school perpetrated by teachers, school administration employees, other pupils and community members;

(f) Girls in vulnerable situations, in particular girls with disabilities, Batwa girls and refugee girls, experience societal, infrastructural and economic barriers in access to education.

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen awareness-raising campaigns to overcome traditional attitudes that constitute obstacles to the education of girls and women and that it:**

(a) **Tackle discriminatory stereotypes that require girls to perform significantly more housework than boys;**

(b) **Ensure that every school is provided with adequate sanitation facilities for girls to prevent them from missing or dropping out of school because of menstruation;**

(c) Repeal the mandatory suspension of pregnant girls from school and develop a comprehensive policy for the reintegration of pregnant girls and adolescent mothers into schools, including access to support services such as counselling in parenting skills, childcare facilities and appropriate sexual and reproductive health services;

(d) Strengthen awareness-raising and training of school personnel and pupils on zero tolerance for gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and establish confidential reporting mechanisms for victims and witnesses and accountability mechanisms to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence and harassment at school are prosecuted and adequately punished;

(e) Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to ensure the provision of inclusive education for girls and boys with disabilities and financial support for girls who cannot afford school materials, and ensure that all girls have access to education, including in remote areas and refugee camps, for example by establishing mobile schools.

Employment

34. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to address discrimination against women in employment, including through the implementation of Law No. 13/2009 of 27 May 2009 regulating labour in Rwanda, which, inter alia, provides for equal opportunities and equal pay for work of equal value and prohibits discrimination based on sex, marital status or family responsibilities, as well as gender-based violence against women and sexual harassment in the workplace. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) Women's occupational segregation, in particular their overrepresentation in the low-paid agricultural and informal sectors, and the relatively higher unemployment rate among women, no matter their level of education;

(b) Violence against and the mistreatment of women street vendors by private security personnel, as well as their arrest and detention by the police;

(c) The persistence of sexual harassment in the workplace in the State party.

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party promote the integration of women into the labour force and adopt a gender-sensitive and adequately resourced employment policy, which would include temporary special measures to promote women's employment, in particular in the formal sector and in traditionally male-dominated fields of employment, and intensify women's technical and vocational training in those fields. It also recommends that the State party:**

(a) Promote the equal sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men, including by introducing compulsory paternity or shared parental leave following childbirth;

(b) Adopt effective measures, including the provision of vocational training, and incentives for women to work in non-traditional fields, and eliminate occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical, in the public and private spheres;

(c) Create a regulatory framework for the informal sector to provide women in that sector with access to social protection and monitor their working conditions;

(d) Expand the practice of free markets to all areas of the country, legalize street vending and prosecute and punish all forms of violence and harassment against women street vendors;

(e) Vigorously enforce the prohibition of sexual harassment, develop a confidential and safe system for women to file complaints and ensure that each complaint is investigated and that perpetrators are adequately punished.

Female domestic workers

36. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to reduce child labour, including domestic work. It is concerned, however, that many girls living in poverty continue to be exploited as domestic workers, a condition in which they frequently face precarious conditions, labour exploitation, sexual abuse, violence and harassment.

37. **The Committee recommends that the State party vigorously prosecute and punish the exploitation of child labour. It also recommends that the State party strengthen the capacity of labour inspectors to monitor workplaces, including in private households, and publish information on such inspections and on the sanctions imposed in order to discourage labour exploitation, especially that of children. It further recommends that the State party:**

(a) Provide families living in poverty with adequate social protection and create income generating opportunities for them;

(b) Design and implement awareness-raising campaigns targeted at domestic workers and families living in poverty, informing them about their rights and the dangers associated with domestic work;

(c) Ensure access by domestic workers to legal aid and complaint mechanisms and provide them with adequate victim protection and support, as well as with access to exit schemes.

Health

38. The Committee notes with appreciation that the rate of maternal mortality has been significantly reduced. It notes with concern, however, that the rate remains relatively high in the State party, inter alia because of insufficient skilled birth attendants, unhygienic conditions, insufficient access to postnatal care, the low number of skilled medical personnel and health facilities being as far as one-hour walking distance for many women. It is also concerned that:

(a) Maternal mortality is further exacerbated by unsafe abortions, to which many women must resort because of the criminalization of abortion, the practice of which is allowed only in exceptional cases with particularly cumbersome requirements, namely the issuance of a court order in cases of rape, incest or forced marriage and the authorization of two doctors, if the health of the pregnant woman or the fetus is in danger, which in practice renders legal abortion inaccessible;

(b) An alarming number of women are serving prison sentences for abortion-related offences, many of whom were arrested when seeking emergency health care following abortion complications;

(c) Access to modern forms of contraception remains insufficient, as they are provided at a limited number of health facilities;

(d) The incidence of cervical cancer remains high and mental health services are lacking.

39. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to further reduce the high rate of maternal mortality, including by improving the**

quality, availability and accessibility of medical assistance throughout its territory. It also recommends that the State party:

(a) **In the context of its revision of the Penal Code currently in progress, decriminalize abortion in all cases and remove the cumbersome requirements for access to legal abortion;**

(b) **Provide women with access to good-quality post-abortion care, especially in case of complications resulting from unsafe abortions;**

(c) **Pardon women who are currently serving a prison sentence for abortion-related offences;**

(d) **Provide education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as adequate access to affordable, modern methods of contraception, including emergency contraception, to all women and girls;**

(e) **Provide regular cervical cancer screening possibilities for women, as well as access to mental health services.**

Economic empowerment of women

40. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to facilitate women's access to financial credit, including by establishing the programme for women and youth access to finance (2012-2022). It notes with concern, however, that women are often incapable of providing the guarantees necessary to obtain loans and other forms of credit, as in most households the main assets are controlled by men. It is concerned that women's unequal access to credit limits their access to or excludes them from different areas of trade.

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party further facilitate women's access to financial credit, in particular for women who are not able to provide the necessary guarantees, for example by establishing a State fund for small credits and microcredits available to women without guarantees or collateral. It also recommends that the State party strengthen initiatives aimed at encouraging the sustainable economic empowerment of women.**

Rural women

42. The Committee welcomes the adoption of a number of legislative measures that have improved gender equality in terms of access to land, in particular Law No. 43/2013, and are implemented under the Land Tenure Regularization Programme. It also welcomes the measures taken to reduce poverty, such as the Vision 2020 Umurenge programme and the second Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, which highlight gender as a cross-cutting issue. It is concerned, however, that:

(a) **The implementation of Law No. 43/2013 is hampered by stereotypical attitudes towards ownership and inheritance by women and by the continued application of discriminatory customs;**

(b) **Awareness about women's rights is generally low among rural women, who face discriminatory customs, patriarchal attitudes, stereotypes and a resulting fear of stigmatization that hinders them from claiming their rights;**

(c) **A high number of rural women continue to be employed in unpaid or low-paid, informal or hazardous sectors;**

(d) **Rural women, including female heads of households, are particularly affected by poverty and illiteracy.**

43. The Committee draws the State party's attention to general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women and recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that rural women, as well as local authorities, mediation committee members (*abunzi*) and judicial officers, are made sufficiently aware of women's rights under the Convention and the new legislation regarding women's rights to land;

(b) Ensure that rural women engaged in unpaid work or in the informal sector have access to non-contributory social protection schemes in line with general recommendation No. 16 (1991) on unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises, and that those employed in the formal sector have access to contributory social security benefits in their own right, irrespective of their marital status;

(c) Protect the occupational health and safety of rural women from hazardous situations;

(d) Provide rural women with access to adult literacy programmes and establish poverty eradication programmes specifically targeted at women.

Batwa women

44. The Committee is concerned about intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization experienced by Batwa women, who are exposed to extreme poverty, limited access to basic services, illiteracy, unemployment and gender-based violence. The Committee understands that, following the genocide, the State party's priority has been to avoid any form of ethnicity-based categorization. It is concerned, however, that this approach contributes to obscuring the specific problems of Batwa women.

45. The Committee recommends that the State party collect data on the specific situation of Batwa women with a view to assessing the extent of discrimination against them, including intersecting forms of discrimination, and develop measures to overcome it. It also recommends that the State party ensure equal access by Batwa women to basic services, implement literacy programmes for them and conduct awareness-raising campaigns to inform them of how to claim their rights under the Convention, including by reporting gender-based violence against women and accessing victim assistance programmes.

Women with disabilities

46. The Committee appreciates the measures taken by the State party to provide support to women with disabilities. It notes with concern, however, that Law No. 01/2007 of 20 January 2007, relating to the protection of disabled persons in general, does not provide for specific measures for women and girls with disabilities. It is also concerned about:

(a) The particularly limited representation of women with disabilities in decision-making positions, with only one seat reserved for a person with disabilities in Parliament;

(b) The lack of information about access by women and girls with disabilities to sexual and reproductive health services and rights.

47. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt legal provisions to eliminate intersecting forms of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. It also recommends that the State party adopt special measures, for

example an increase in the number of reserved seats in Parliament, to increase the representation of women with disabilities in political institutions at all levels, as well as ensure their full access to information about sexual and reproductive health services and rights and how to access them.

Refugee women and girls

48. The Committee commends the State party on its acceptance of a high number of refugees. It is nevertheless concerned about:

(a) The high incidence of gender-based violence against women and girls, including sexual violence such as rape and so-called "survival sex", in and around refugee camps, which is furthermore a significant cause of the relatively high rate of teenage pregnancy;

(b) The low rate of reporting of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, by refugee women and girls, inter alia for fear of reprisals;

(c) The high risk of trafficking for refugee women and girls;

(d) The inadequate security situation for women and girls in refugee camps;

(e) Limited access to assistance for refugee women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, owing inter alia to the remoteness of refugee camps from the Isange One Stop Centres.

49. **The Committee draws the State party's attention to general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women. It recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase the security situation both within and around refugee camps, including by deploying an adequate number of police officers, including women, ensuring adequate lighting within and around camps, establishing Isange One Stop Centres in the vicinity of camps and providing women and girls with accessible shelter and food for them and their children to avoid so-called "survival sex";**

(b) **Provide confidential complaint mechanisms for refugee women and girls who are victims of violations of their rights and enhance their access to justice, including through the deployment of mobile courts to camps, and provide adequate protection for victims and witnesses, including the non-disclosure of identity and the provision of adequate shelter;**

(c) **Strengthen the measures taken to prevent trafficking in refugee camps.**

Marriage and family relations

50. The Committee notes with concern that women in non-formal unions, including women married under customary law or in polygamous unions, lack legal protection, as the law recognizes only civil monogamous marriages between women and men. It notes that, accordingly, women in non-formal relationships have no entitlements to a share of their partner's assets, including land. While Law No. 59/2008 on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence provides for equal distribution of commonly owned property in non-formal unions, such co-ownership is difficult to prove for women in non-formal unions in the absence of property certificates.

51. **The Committee draws the State party's attention to general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage,**

family relations and their dissolution. While recommending that the State party continue to encourage the regularization of marriage and to discourage the practice of polygamy, which is contrary to the Convention and the dignity of women and girls, it also recommends that the State party ensure legal protection of the economic rights of women in non-formal unions.

Amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

52. **The Committee encourages the State party to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

53. **The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention.**

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

54. **The Committee calls for the realization of substantive gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

Dissemination

55. **The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, the ministries, Parliament and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.**

Technical assistance

56. **The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in this respect.**

Ratification of other treaties

57. **The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments[1] would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which it is not yet a party.**

[1] The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Follow-up to the concluding observations

58. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 23 (d) and (e), 25 (b) and 27 (b) above.

Preparation of the next report

59. The Committee invites the State party to submit its tenth periodic report in March 2021. In case of delay, the report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

60. The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).